



Leyte offers tour package to Palarong Pambansa delegates

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Tacloban City – Leyte will offer one of the country's most affordable tour packages for thousands of delegates of the Palarong Pambansa, giving visitors the opportunity to have a quick tour to historical, religious and man-made places of interest in the city and a nearby town.

The P100.00 total package covers transportation, tour guide, entrance fee, and a souvenir item made of indigenous materials, said Department of Tourism Eastern Visayas regional director Karina Rosa Tiopes.

The three-hour tour, which will kick off April 25, starts at the city's RTR plaza. On board in an Icot-Icot vehicle, tour guides drive visitors to major streets passing through Price Mansion; Provincial Capitol; Leyte Park Hotel; Family Park; the statue of the Image of the Crucified Christ; the statue of Maria Kannon, an Asian Madonna that symbolizes peace; and Sto. Niño Church.

The vehicle was named after Leyte Governor Carlos Jericho Petilla's nickname "Icot" (Filipino word for go around). It is a multi-cab that can accommodate up to 10 persons.

"There are four Icor-Icot vehicles that will operate during the weeklong athletic event. For big groups, we offer them to tour operators to meet the demand," Tiopes said.

Just like the regular Icot-Icot weekend tour, the morning run starts at 9:00 while the afternoon run starts at 2:00. Temporary booking office was set up at the Leyte Sports Development Center. It is manned by staff from the provincial government and Department of Tourism.

The tour will make stopover in Sto. Niño Shrine and Heritage Museum; MacArthur Landing Memorial National Park in Palo, Leyte; and the famous San Juanico Bridge, one of the country's longest.

The Sto. Niño Shrine is one of the 29 presidential rest houses built by the late President Ferdinand Marcos. It was constructed for his wife Imelda Marcos, who was born in this city.

A chapel dominates the ground floor with the image of Sto. Niño as focal point. Elevated by 2-3 steps on the peripheral are 13 guest rooms, each with varied motifs representing the different regions of the country. On the second floor is a very spacious ballroom as well as the bed chambers of the former First Family.

Inside the mansion you can find some collections of paintings of historical events in Leyte. The shrine was also a palace during the Marcos regime, with Olympic-size swimming pool, state dining rooms, about 13 guest rooms and private bedrooms for Imelda, Ferdinand and their children.

From the shrine, the tour car will proceed to a nearby town and make the next stopover at the monument, which marks the spot where General Douglas MacArthur landed with the American Liberation Forces in 1944.

The statues of the liberators stand in a lagoon, 1.5 times bigger than life-size. It is also the site of the 50th Leyte Landing Anniversary Commemorative Rock Garden of Peace. A beautiful beach can be found in the area.

The last stopover is in San Juanico Bridge. It is the second longest bridge in the Philippines and in fifth in Southeast Asia, with a total length of 2.2 kilometers. It has 43 spans rising 41 meters above sea level and an arch that allows sea vessels to pass beneath it.

The bridge is part of the Pan-Philippines Highway that connects Mindanao and Luzon via land travel. It crosses San Juanico Strait, bridging the islands of Samar and Leyte. It takes approximately 10 minutes to cross from Tacloban City by passenger jeepneys, bus, or private vehicle.

The strait below the bridge has numerous islets and whirlpools that offer "picturesque view."

Standby tour guides was also available for those who wants an individual or family tour but the rate is higher since private tour operators will run it.

"We will prioritize students that can't afford more expensive tour packages but we will accommodate coaches and other interest visitors as well. They will have a chance to see the city," Tiopes said.

This year's Palarong Pambansa hosted by Leyte province will start April 27 and will end May 2, 2009 with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo leading the grand opening on April 28.

Courtesy:

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